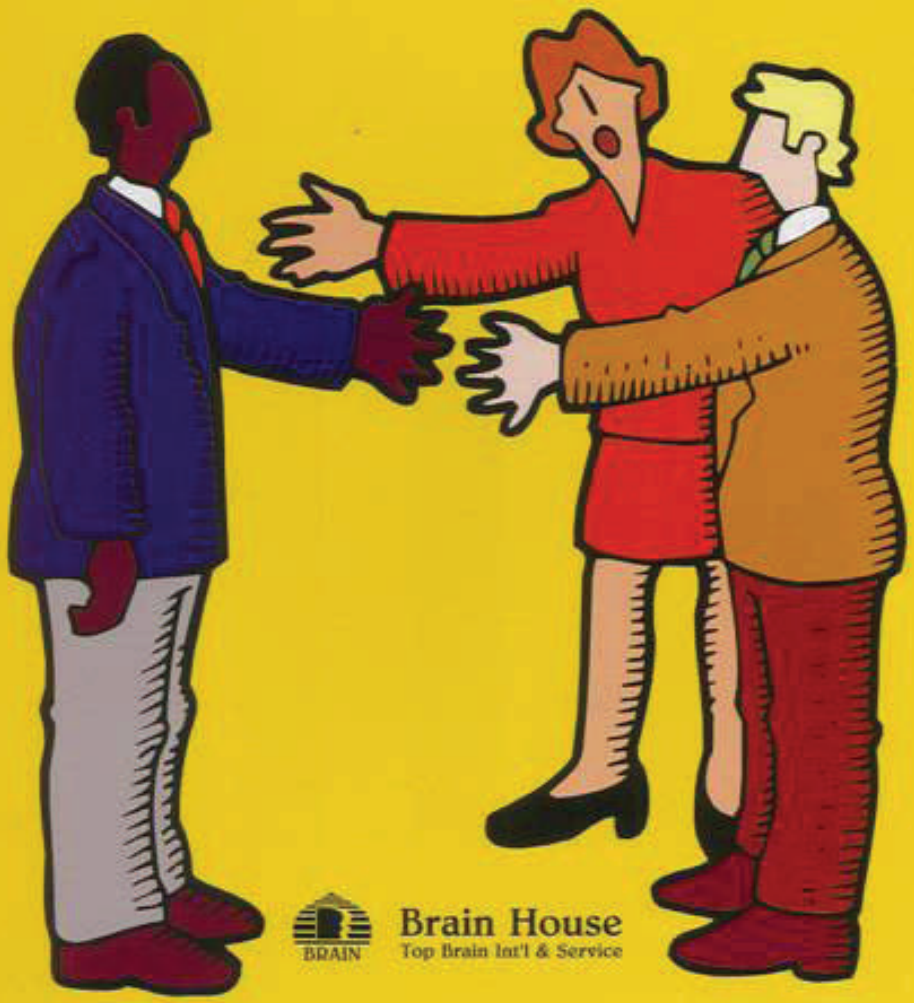
99 Fast ways to improve your English

By Ted Tucker M.Ed. PGCE (TEFL)
Soon-Bong Park, Ph.D.
SR Ryu, Ph.D.
Eunsun Park, B.A.



Brain House
Top Brain Int'l & Service



99 Fast ways to improve your English

** A resource for correcting the most common errors in English

** Includes a diagnostic test and ***Easy*** instructions for fast improvement



An essential tool for every student of English

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By Ted Tucker M.Ed. PGCE (TEFL)

with credit to:

S.B. Park, Ph.D.
SR Ryu, Ph.D.
Veronica Park, B.Ed.

99 Fast Ways to Improve Your English

is intended to provide students of English with a useful and easy to use resource.

This book focuses on common mistakes and errors made by students and provides simple model statements to correct those errors.

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Diagnostic Test



The diagnostic test is designed to help you identify specific problems you may have with how you use English.

After you answer the 99 questions, check your answers in the key.

How you do in each section will tell you where to look in the book to improve your specific problems. You may find some questions easy, but it is good to review the basic reasons behind them as well.

Even if you know the correct answer, it is important to be sure that you know WHY it is correct!

Good luck! You are on your way to correcting the most common errors made in English.

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Greetings and Farewells



1. Select the best greeting and response.
 a. Hello, how are you? Fine, thank you. And you?
 b. Hello, how are you? Just fine, and you?

Common Confusion



2. You just found out that you won a lottery for $10,000,000! You might say
 a. I'm so exciting!
 b. I'm so excited!

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3. Your boss (or teacher) is talking about something is not interesting to you. You might say
 a. I'm so boring.
 b. I'm so bored.

4. You might ask a friend
 a. Will you loan me $5 until tomorrow?
 b. Will you borrow me $5 until tomorrow?

5. a. I loaned Y5000 from Mr. Tanaka.
 b. I borrowed Y5000 from Mr. Tanaka.

6. a. Most of Koreans like spicy food.
 b. Most Koreans like spicy food.

7. a. I'm really tired. I think I'll lay down for a while.
 b. I'm really tired. I think I'll lie down for a while.

8. a. Your book is lying on the floor.
 b. Your book is laying on the floor.

9. a. I learn English every day.
 b. I study English every day

10. a. I raise every morning at sunrise.
 b. I rise every morning at sunrise.

11. a. They raise the flag every morning at the president's office.
 b. They rise the flag every morning at the president's office.

12. a. There was a big fight outside a disco last night. The police said the incident should not have happened.
 b. There was a big fight outside a disco last night. The police said the accident should not have happened.

13. a. I enjoy looking at movies.
 b. I enjoy watching movies.

14. a. I see the newspaper every morning.
 b. I look at the newspaper every morning.

15. a. Did you see the accident in front of the gym yesterday?
 b. Did you look at the accident in front of the gym yesterday?

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16. a. I agree with you. It's time to go home!
 b. I agree to you. It's time to go home!

17. a. The big boss said he agreed to our demands.
 We'll all get a big raise.
 b. The big boss said he agreed with our demands.
 We'll all get a big raise.

18. a. The movie was very impression.
 b. That was a very impressive movie.

19. a. I was very impressive with the movie.
 b. I was very impressed by the movie.

Wrestling with Grammar



20. a. He doesn't English.
 b. He doesn't speak English.

21. a. He can't speak English.
 b. He can't English.

22. You don't have a pen I can borrow, do you?
 a. Yes, I don't.
 b. No, I don't.

23. a. You English study?
 b. Do you study English?

24. a. I slept very well last night because I was tired from studying all day.
 b. I very slept last night because I was tired from studying all day.

25. a. She studied very hard last night.
 b. She studied very hardly last night.

26. a. I often get up lately if I don't use my alarm clock.
 b. I often get up late if I don't use my alarm clock.

27. a. He is not enough tall to play basketball.
 b. He is not tall enough to play basketball.

28. a. Dr. Kim doesn't have money enough to buy a Mercedes.
 b. Dr. Kim doesn't have enough money to buy a Mercedes.

29. a. I really love Japanese sumo.
 b. I really love Japan sumo.

30. a. The Italian language is easy to learn.
 b. The Italy language is easy to learn.

31. Mr. Johnson lives on Phuket Island.
 a. There has beautiful beaches.
 b. It has beautiful beaches.

32. a. I was married two years ago.
 b. I was married two years before

33. a. I was married two years before.
 b. I was married two years before I bought an apartment.

34. a. Since it is not raining, I do not need an umbrella.
 b. Since it is not raining, I need not an umbrella.

35. a. I wasn't hungry this morning so I have not breakfast.
 b. I wasn't hungry this morning so I did not have breakfast.

36. a. Until now women in many parts of the world do not have the same rights as men.
 b. Women in many parts of the world do not yet have the same rights as men.

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37. a. My boss told me that I had to finish the report until noon.
 b. My boss told me that I had to finish the report by noon.

38. a. Miss Ramirez and Miss Choi have the same hair style.
 b. Miss Ramirez and Miss Choi have same hair style.

39. a. Bill's car is the same to Fred's car.
 b. Bill's car is the same as Fred's car.

40. a. Alice prepared for the English test all night.
 b. Alice prepared the English test all night.

41. a. Even if it rains tomorrow I will travel to Prague.
 b. Even though it rains tomorrow I will travel to Prague.

42. a. Almost Koreans have black eyes and hair.
 b. Most Koreans have black eyes and hair.

43. a. Almost all Chinese have black eyes and hair.
 b. Almost Chinese have black eyes and hair.

Misused and Abused Words



44. a. I received a phone call from my sister-in-law in America.
 b. I received a phone from my sister-in-law from America.

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45. a. I made a promise to my boyfriend to have dinner with him tonight.
 b. I have a promise with my boyfriend tonight to have dinner.

46. a. I respect my parents so I always listen to their saying.
 b. I respect m parents so I always listen to what they say.

47. a. He has been dead for three years.
 b. He's dead about three years ago.

48. a. My vacation is next month.
 b. My holiday is next month.

49. a. My days off are Saturday and Sunday.
 b. My holiday is Saturday and Sunday.

50. If the speaker is at school
 a. I will come home right after class.
 b. I will go home right after class.

51. a. After work today, I will play with my friends.
 b. After work today, I will go singing and drinking with my friends.

52. a. I will go bowling tomorrow.
 b. I will play bowling tomorrow.

53. a. I live at Hyundae Apartments, number 309.
 b. I live at Hyundae Apart, number 309.

54. a. I have many fond remembrances from my childhood.
 b. I have many fond memories of my childhood.

55. a. I have to meet my professor at three hour.
 b. I have to meet my professor at three o'clock.

56. a. I learn 20 new vocabularies a day.
 b. I learn 20 new words a day.

57. a. My girlfriend and I often go *window shopping* on the weekend.
 b. My girlfriend and I often go *eye shopping* on the weekend.

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58. a. My brother is a salaryman.
b. My brother is a lawyer.

59. a. The clothes she has on are very beautiful.
b. The wear she has on is very beautiful.

60. a. Wilcox is famous for its delicious apples.
b. Wilcox is well-known for its delicious apples.

61. a. I took a travel to Beijing last summer.
b. I took a trip to Beijing last year.

62. a. I want to trip to Europe after I graduate.
b. I want to travel to Europe after I graduate.

63. a. Traffic accidents are very common in India.
b. Traffic accidents are very popular in India.

64.a. I would like to introduce my English professor, Mr. Jim.
b. I would like to introduce my English professor, Mr. Heard.

65. a. She was offered an opportunity to take a great job in Paris, but she denied to take it.
b. She was offered an opportunity to take a great job in Paris, but she refused to take it.

66. a. Some people say he gambles away all of his earnings but he refuses it.
b. Some people say he gambles away all of his earnings but he denies it.

67. a. Maybe I think I will become a reporter after I graduate from the university.
b. I think I will become a reporter after I graduate from the university.

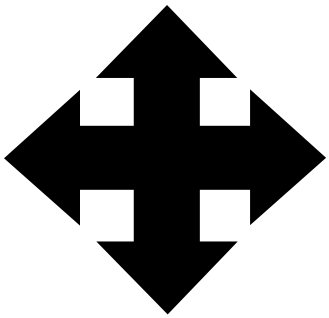
68. a. I no longer sleep in the same room as my male room mate because he snores too loudly.
b. I stopped sleeping with my male room mate because he snores too loudly.

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69. a. Olga majored political science.
b. Olga majored in political science.

70. a. This morning I started making breakfast at 6:30.
b. Today morning I started making breakfast at 6:30.

Preposition Power



71. We all sleep late _____ a holiday.
a. on
b. at

72. We should meet _____ your house.
a. in
b. at

73. Hurry up and get _____ the bus before it leaves!
a. on
b. in

74. Hurry up and get _____ the car so we can get to school on time.
a. on
b. in

75. The last time I saw the rabbit out here, he was hopping _____ your house!
a. in
b. into

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76. Let's go to Walmart _____ the weekend.
 a. at
 b. on

77. Dr. Omar was born _____ 1976.
 a. in
 b. on

78. My birthday is _____ July.
 a. on
 b. in

79. My birthday is _____ July 7th.
 a. on
 b. in

80. My birthday is _____ Monday, July 7th.
 a. on
 b. in

81. My house is _____ Columbus Road.
 a. on
 b. at

82. I live _____ 4255 East 23rd Street.
 a. on
 b. at

83. Let's keep this a secret _____ you and me, okay?
 a. between
 b. among



Articles Made Easy

84. I had _____ this morning.
 a. a breakfast
 b. breakfast

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85. I am from _____.
 a. the Columbo
 b. Columbo

86. That is _____car.
 a. a my
 b. my

87. _____ is my favorite sport.
 a. basketball
 b. the basketball

88. When she broke her arm, they had to take _____ x-ray.
 a. an
 b. a

89. The professor gave her _____ to miss class.
 a. permission
 b. a permission

90. I bought _____ desk today.
 a. a one
 b. one

91. I saw _____ at your house yesterday
 a. a policeman
 b. policeman

92. What _____ horse race!
 a. exciting
 b. an exciting

93. I have _____.
 a. cold
 b. a cold

94. _____ are smarter than dogs
 a. The cats
 b. cats

95. We can't live without _____ to breathe.
 a. the air
 b. air

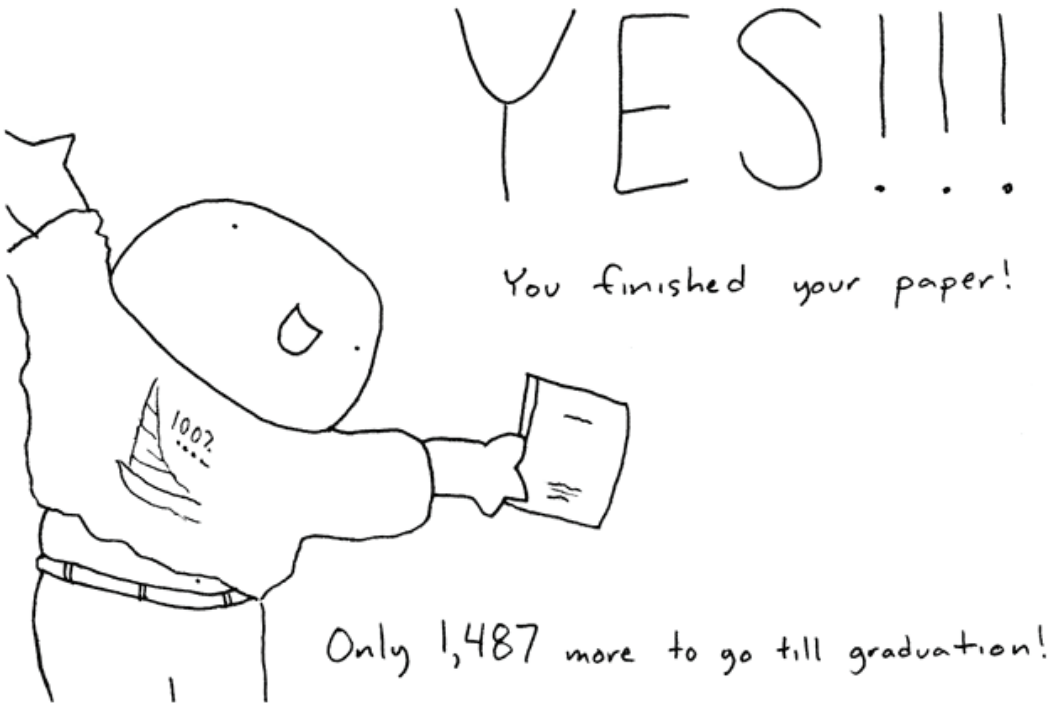
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96. _____ are always a bad day at work.
 a. The Mondays
 b. Mondays

97. _____ language is tonal.
 a. Chinese
 b. The Chinese

98. _____ I live in is very small.
 a. House
 b. The house

99. I took a vacation in _____.
 a. Rocky Mountains
 b. the Rocky Mountains



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Answer Key

1. b
2. b
3. b
4. a
5. b
6. b
7. b
8. a
9. b
10. b
11. a
12. a
13. b
14. b
15. a or b
16. a
17. a
18. b
19. b
20. b
21. a
22. b
23. b
24. a
25. a
26. b
27. b
28. b
29. a
30. a
31. b
32. a
33. b
34. a
35. b
36. b
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38. a
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76. b
77. a
78. b
79. a
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81. a
82. b
83. a
84. b
85. b
86. b
87. a
88. a
89 .a
90. b
91. a
92. b
93. b
94. b
95. b
96. b
97. b
98. b
99. b

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How did you do?



Record your scores for each section below.

Concentrate your studies in the areas where you have the lowest percentage of questions correct.

Greetings: _____

Common Confusion: _____

Grammar: _____

Misused and Abused: _____

Propositions: _____

Articles: _____

Notes:

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Part One:

Greetings and Farewells



FOR NATURAL SOUNDING CONVERSATION:

The fastest way to improve your English usage is to not use mechanical or memorized phrases for your greetings and farewells.

Most students have memorized one or two basic greetings and use them too often. Some of the greetings that are taught to young students are stiff and unnatural. In particular the tried and true, and very tired, "Fine, thank you, and you?"

Most native speakers will immediately adjust their language to what they guess is your English skill level based only on your initial greetings and responses.

If you greet them with a mechanical and unnatural greeting, they may give you a very simple response and most likely won't be very responsive - as they will assume that your skill level is low and that it will be difficult to communicate with you.

Don't let them under-rate you based on a poor first impression.

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Hello!

A common greeting set:

A: *Good morning, how are you?*
B: *I'm fine thank you, and you?*

Try a more flexible set of initial greetings such as:

A: *Good morning, how are you today?*
A: *Good afternoon, how are you doing today?*
A: *Good evening, how are you doing?*
A: *How do you do?*

Your responses can be even more flexible and demonstrate warmth and friendliness.

B: *I'm doing very well, how about you?*
B: *Great! How are you doing today?*
B: *Just fine, and you?*
B: *I'm okay, how about you?*

Though often popularized on television and movies, avoid overly familiar and casual greetings unless you are talking to close friends.

Examples:

A: *Yo!*
A: *Howdy!*
A: *What's up?*
A: *How's it going?*
A: *What's happening?*

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Appropriate Farewells:
These farewells are appropriate in a business setting or when leaving people other than close friends.

A: *Good bye.*
A: *It was nice to see you again.*
A: *Good evening/night.*
A: *Have a good evening/day/night.*

Casual Farewells:
Use these farewells only when leaving close friends.

A: *See you later.*
A: *Take it easy*
A: *Bye-bye.*

"See you again" though common throughout Asia, is not commonly used among native speakers.

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Notes for Part One:

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Part Two:
Common Confusion

Some of the most common errors in usage are between certain sets of words. Master these ten sets and you will have made a great improvement!

Bored/Boring, Interested/Interesting,
and **Excited/Exciting**

These participial adjectives create problems for most students of English. The easiest way to remember them is that the ***–ed*** form represents the feeling one has, and the ***–ing*** form represents what has caused the feeling.

Don't say: I am so ***boring***.
Do say: The movie was ***boring***. I am ***bored***.

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Don't say:
I am so ***exciting***!

Do say:
The lottery is so ***exciting***!

If I win, I will be so ***excited***!

Don't say: I am so ***interesting***.
Do say: The history of Asia is very ***interesting***.

I am very ***interested*** in it.

Yes, you may be very ***interesting***, but you should leave that up to people that know you and who are ***interested*** in you.

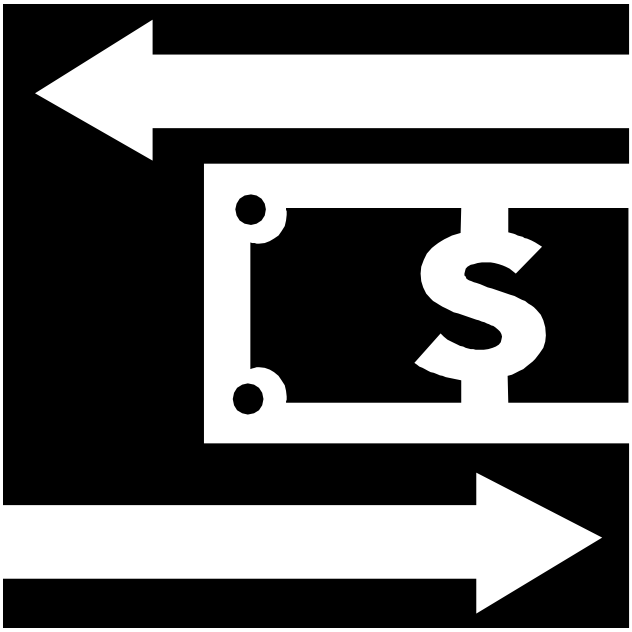
Many teachers are ***boring*** and their students are ***bored***. Sometimes a teacher is ***bored*** by his or her students.

You may be an ***exciting*** person, but as with "***interesting***", we might best leave that to other people to decide!

Lend/Loan/Borrow

This trio of words are regularly confused by students and, as a result, frequently used incorrectly.

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Loan can be a noun as the name of a transaction where someone ***borrows*** something from someone who ***lends*** it to them.

It can also be a verb with a meaning similar to that of ***lend***.

Lend and ***borrow*** are both verbs.

If I ***lend*** something to you (money?), I give it to you temporarily—expecting that you will return it.

If I ***borrow*** something from you, I take it from you temporarily, knowing that you expect me to return it to you. I get or receive something from you.

Don't say: Ramona, will you ***borrow*** me 20 pesos?

Do say: Ramona, will you ***lend (or loan)*** me 20 pesos so I can buy lunch today?
She might say: Of course, I will be glad to ***lend (or loan)*** you 20 pesos!
or

Don't say: Su-Hyun, may I ***lend*** 5000 won from you?

Do say: Su-Hyun, may I ***borrow*** 5000 won from you so I can buy lunch today?

She might say: Of course, I will be glad to ***lend (or loan)*** you 5000 won!

Just as common:

Do say: Can I ***borrow*** your cell phone for a moment? I need to call home.

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Do say: Would you ***lend (or loan)*** your cell phone to me for a moment? I need to call home.

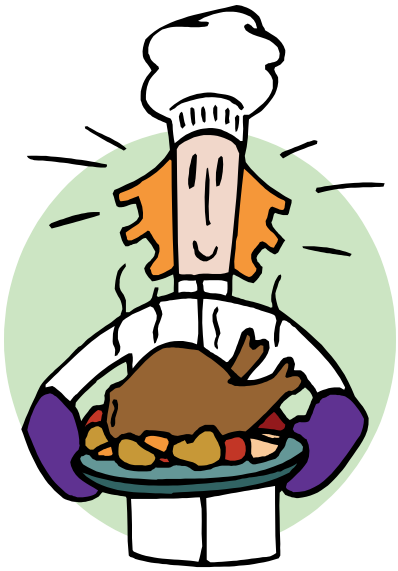
Note that I borrow something ***from*** you, but you lend something ***to*** me. Or, I may lend something ***to*** you, but you borrow something ***from*** me. Remember: ***lend to, borrow from***

Using ***loan*** as a noun:

Do say: Jacque's ***loan (not lend)*** was for 50 francs.

Most/Most of

Students often confuse the use of ***most*** and ***most of***. ***Most*** should be used if the word following it is a noun or adjective. ***Most of*** should be used if the word following it is a pronoun, a proper noun used as a possessive, or an article.

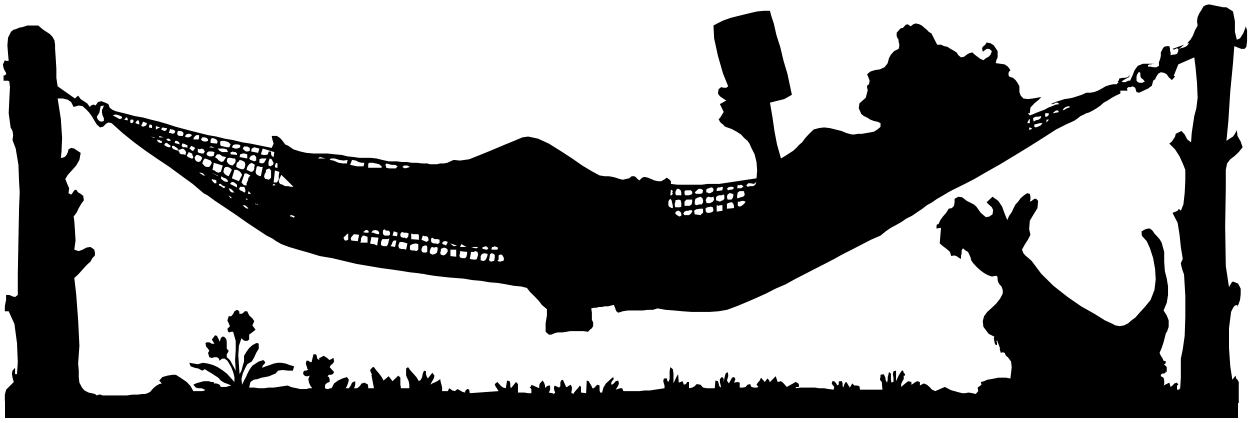


Don't say: ***Most of*** Americans eat turkey on Thanksgiving Day.

Do say: ***Most*** Americans eat turkey on Thanksgiving Day.

Don't say: ***Most*** Mr. Kim's students hate to study English.
Do say: ***Most of*** Mr. Kim's students hate to study English.

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Lay/Lie

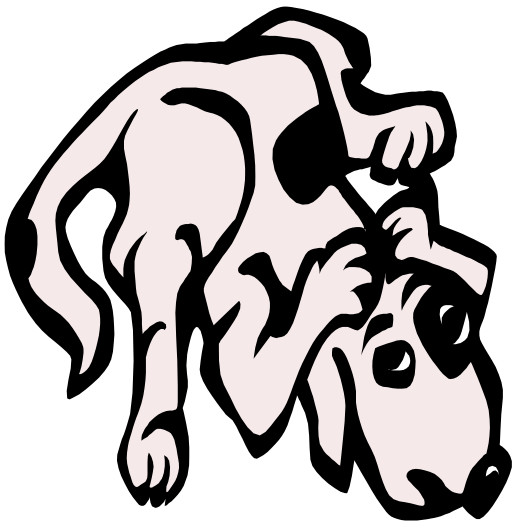
Even some native speakers have trouble with these two words—learn them well and you will be a super star!

Lie is an intransitive verb and never has an object. It means to stay at rest in a horizontal position.

Don't say: I am going to ***lay*** down for a nap.
Do say: I am going to ***lie*** down for a nap.

Lay is a transitive verb and always requires an object. It means to set or put something down.

Don't say: Please ***lie*** this book on the desk.
Do say: Please ***lay*** this book on the desk.



Remember the saying "*Let sleeping dogs lie*" and note that the sleeping dog is not moving.

Lay is more active than ***lie***.

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Learn/Study

Students of English often reverse the meanings of these two words.

Learn means to gain knowledge or understanding of something by studying or by experience. ***Study*** can be a noun, when it means to use your mental power to ***learn*** about (to understand) something, or a verb when it means the act of ***studying***.

Examples:



Don't say: I ***learn*** English every day.

Do say: I ***study*** English every day.

This means I sit down and read my books, listen to tapes and practice hoping to understand it.

Don't say: I hope to ***study*** English well.

Do say: I hope to ***learn*** English well.

This means I hope that I will understand and use the language well because my understanding of it is good.

Raise/Rise

These two words, like ***lie*** and ***lay***, are often misused, even by native speakers—you can get the upper hand by understanding them.

Raise means to lift up something.

Don't say: We ***rise*** the flag everyday at the student assembly.

Do say: We ***raise*** the flag everyday at the student assembly.

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Rise means to go up, stand up, or get out of bed.

Don't say: I ***raise*** every morning at sunrise.

Do say: I ***rise*** every morning at sunrise.



You can look at the ***sunrise*** in the morning and remember that the sun ***rises*** every morning.



Accident/Incident

The words ***accident*** and ***incident*** are often used interchangeably, but they should not be.

An ***accident*** is an unforeseen, unpredictable event.

An ***incident*** is also an event, but may or may not be unforeseen and unpredictable. An incident may also be planned and occur deliberately.

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Don't say: A man murdered his parents last night in order to gain access to their money. This kind of ***accident*** is deplorable and has shocked the entire nation. (If a man plans a murder it is not an accident, it is an incident.)

Do say: This kind of ***incident*** is deplorable and has shocked the entire nation.



See/Look at/Watch

These terms are often used incorrectly by students of English.

Use ***see*** when you mean to perceive something with the eyes.

Use ***look at*** when you mean to use your eyes to see something. Often the thing or things you are viewing does not move or is stationary (such as a painting or photographs)

Use ***watch*** when the thing you are viewing is moving or changes (such as television or a movie).



Don't say: Whenever I smoke, my wife ***sees*** me with disgust.
Do say: Whenever I smoke, my wife ***looks at*** me with disgust.

Don't say: Did you ***look at*** what just happened?
Do say: Did you ***see*** what just happened?

Don't say: I ***looked at*** TV until 11:00 PM last night.
Do say: I ***watched*** TV until 11:00 PM last night.

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Agree with/Agree to



These terms are often a problem for students of English.

Use ***agree with*** if you have the same opinion, idea, judgment, etc. as another person.

One ***agrees with*** people.

Don't say: Miss Lee ***agreed to*** Mr. Ma's comment about the educational problems in Taiwan.

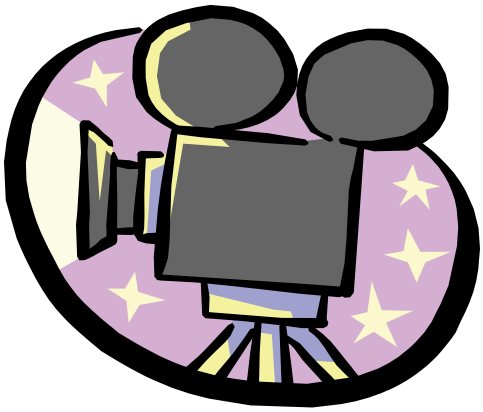
Do say: Miss Lee ***agreed with*** Mr. Ma's comment about the educational problems in Taiwan.

Use ***agree to*** if you concur with the actions, plans, suggestions of another person. One agrees to things.

Don't say: Bill ***agreed with*** his brother's suggestion to lend him money to start his own business.

Do say: Bill ***agreed to*** his brother's suggestion to lend him money to start his own business.

Impressive/Impressively/Impression/Impressed



Many students use the wrong form of the word ***impress.***

Impressive is an adjective and modifies a noun or pronoun.
Impressively is an adverb and modifies a verb.

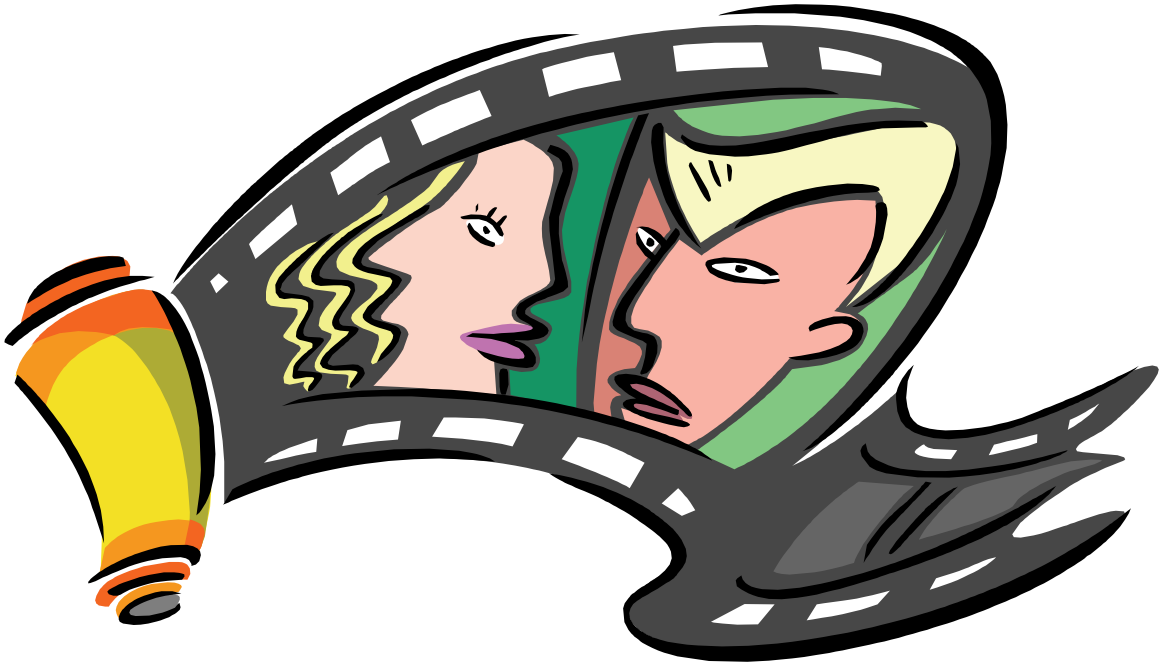
Don't say: The movie was very ***impression***.

Do say: That was a very ***impressive*** movie. (adjective)

Do say: He acted very ***impressively*** in the movie. (adverb)

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Impression is a noun and is used to describe a positive influence that something or someone has made on another.



Don't say: That movie made me ***impressed***.

Do say: That movie made an ***impression*** on me.

Impressed is a verb and is used to indicate that something or someone has had a positive influence on someone.

Don't say: I was very ***impressive*** with the movie.

Do say: I was very ***impressed*** by the movie.

Go to the exercises on the next page ► ► ►

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Confusing Words Exercises

Try these exercises to see if you learned everything from Part Two!
(The answers are upside down on the bottom of the page)

_____1. _____ students don't like too much homework!
a. Most of b. Most

_____2. Will you _____ me W5000 until tomorrow?
a. loan b. borrow

_____3. My English professor is so _____.
a. boring b. bored

_____4. Did you see the car _____ in front of the school?
a. incident b. accident

_____5. Did you _____that movie last night? Wow!
a. look at b. watch c. see

_____6. I don't _____ Dr. Park about my test scores.
a. agree with b. agree to

_____7. Please _____ down and rest. You look exhausted!
a. lie b. lay

_____8. What time did you _____ this morning?
a. rise b. raise

_____9. Dr. Piquet's lecture was very _____.
a. impression b. impressively c. impressive

1. b, 2.a, 3.a, 4.b, 5.b, 6.a, 7.a, 8.a, 9.c

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Notes for Confusing Words:

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Part Three:

Wrestling with Grammar



Though students often have a good grasp of grammar, when they speak they frequently make errors that are inconsistent with their knowledge.

Following are some corrections you can make to improve your speech.

NEGATIVE STATEMENTS



Students of English often forget to include a main verb when making negative statements.

Don't say: He ***doesn't*** English.
Do say: He ***doesn't speak*** English.

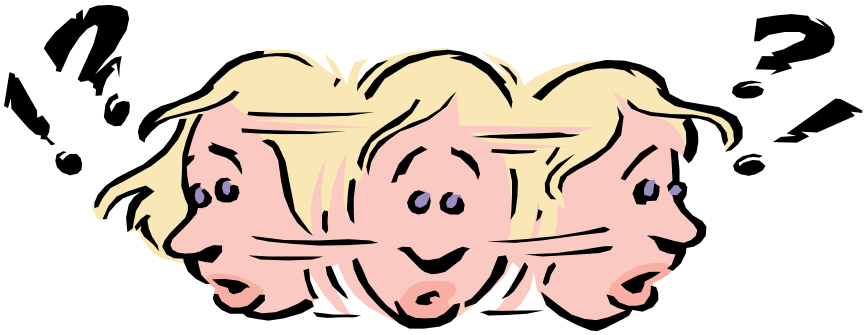
Don't say: He ***can't*** English.
Do say: He ***can't speak*** English.

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NEGATIVE QUESTIONS

Many students answer questions which have negatives in them incorrectly if the answer is ***no***.

If the question is answered ***yes*** - and the person means ***no***, it will confuse native speakers of English.



Students of English often respond by saying ***yes***, meaning that they agree with the statement or question. Native speakers respond with ***no*** as if the negative were not in the question.

Question: You didn't buy another new shirt?

Don't say: Yes, I decided not to because I couldn't find one I liked.
Do say: No, I didn't because I couldn't find one I liked.

WORD ORDER

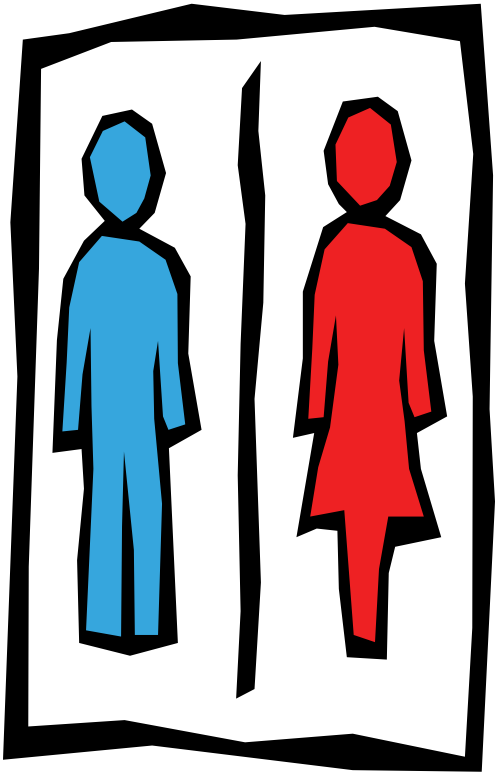
The word order in English is subject, verb, object. Many students confuse English word order with the different word order of their own first language. Be careful to use the SVO form.

Don't say: You English study? (SOV)
Do say: Do you study English? (SVO)

Don't say: You door close. (SOV)
Do say: (You) Close the door. (SVO) You, the subject, is understood and does not need to be stated here.

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HE/SHE



Many students forget to keep the gender consistent (and correct) when they are speaking and using gender-specific pronouns.

Speaking of a male student:

Don't say: ***She*** studied all night.
Do say: ***He*** studied all night.

Be sure to keep the gender consistently male or female when continuing to speak of a specific person.

VERY

The word ***very***, when used to give force or emphasis to the degree that something happens, should modify another adverb, not the verb.

Don't say: I ***very*** slept last night because I was tired from studying all day.

Do say: I slept ***very*** well last night because I was tired from studying all day.

HARDLY/LATELY

The words ***hardly*** and ***lately*** are sometimes used as adverbs incorrectly. Students of English often follow the general rule of adding an ***–ly*** suffix to the adjective to form the adverb. This rule does not apply to the words ***hard*** and ***late***. They are *irregular* adverbs.

Don't say: Her supervisor makes her work very ***hardly***.
Do say: Her supervisor makes her work very ***hard***.

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Don’t say: I often get up ***lately*** if I don't set my alarm clock.
Do say: I often get up ***late*** if I don't set my alarm clock.

ENOUGH

Students of English often place the word ***enough*** in the wrong place in a sentence. ***Enough*** should be placed ***before*** nouns, pronouns, or gerunds.

Don’t say: He doesn’t have money ***enough*** for a new car.
Do say: He doesn’t have ***enough*** money for a new car.

Enough should be placed ***after*** adjectives and adverbs.

Don’t say: He is not ***enough*** tall to play basketball.
Do say: He is not tall ***enough*** to play basketball.



There are, however, three common exceptions to the rule:

There isn’t *time enough* (to do something.

That isn’t *reason enough* (to do or justify something).

and

(Someone) isn’t *fool enough* (to do something).

ADJECTIVE FORMS OF NOUNS

When describing a country's language or products, nouns are often used when the speaker should use the adjective form of the word.

Don’t say: Yesterday, I bought a ***Japan*** TV.

Do say: Yesterday, I bought a ***Japanese*** TV.

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Don't say: The ***Germany*** language is very difficult to learn.
Do say: The ***German*** language is very difficult to learn.

THERE/IT

When referring to a place, such as a city, many people use the word ***there*** as a pronoun and the correct pronoun should be ***it***.



Don't say:

I live on Taiwan.
There has many beautiful mountains and rivers.

Do say:

I live on Taiwan.
It has many beautiful mountains and rivers.

IN/AGO

Students of English often make errors in the use of ***in*** and ***ago*** when they are talking about the past or future - when the reference point in time is now (at this moment).

When the reference point in time is now and you are talking about something in the past use ***ago***. He quit smoking five years ***ago***.

When the reference in time is now and you are talking about something in the future use ***in***. I will quit smoking ***in*** two days.

Don't say: I graduated from university two years ***before***.

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Do say: I graduated from university two years ***ago***.
Do say: I will graduate from university ***in*** two years.

WHILE/DURING

While and ***during*** are both used to talk about two events that occur at the same time. ***While*** should be used before adverbial phrases and ***during*** should be used before nouns or noun phrases.

Don't say: ***While*** our vacation we traveled to twelve European countries.
Do say: ***During*** our vacation we traveled to twelve European countries.



Don't say:
During in high school she took piano lessons.

Do say:
While in high school she took piano lessons.

AUXILIARY VERB *DO*

Frequently students of English forget to use the auxiliary verb ***do*** in negative sentences.

Don't say: Since it is not raining I ***need not*** an umbrella.
Do say: Since it is not raining I ***do not need*** an umbrella.

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Don’t say: I wasn't hungry this morning so I ***have not*** breakfast.

Do say: I wasn't hungry this morning so I ***did not have*** breakfast.

Do say: I ***don’t own*** a car.

STILL/YET

Students often mistakenly use ***until now*** when they should use ***still*** or ***yet***.

Still indicates that a situation in the past continues to the present.
He ***still*** tells funny jokes all the time!

However, ***yet*** indicates that something has not happened. He hasn’t gotten married ***yet***.



Don’t say:
In America, men having long hair is very common among college students ***until now***, just like it was in the 1960's.

Do say:
In America, men having long hair is ***still*** very common among college students, just like it was in the 1960's.

UNTIL/BY

Learners of English are often confused about the difference between the words ***until*** and ***by*** when using these words for time reference.

Until means that something occurred up until a specific time and then stopped.

Example: You have ***until*** Friday to prepare for the test.

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Or something did not happen until a specific time—and could only happen after that time.

Example: You cannot take the test ***until*** Friday.

By means at or before a specific time.

Example: You must use that airplane ticket ***by*** August 15th. (indicating only that it must be used)

Also correct: You have ***until*** August, 2006 to use that airplane ticket. (indicating that something will change—but what will change is not specified.)



Don't say:
My boss told me that I had to turn in the report ***until*** noon.

Do say:
My boss told me that I had to turn in the report ***by*** noon.
(It must be finished by then.)

Do say:
My boss told me that I had ***until*** noon to turn in the report.
(He won't want it after noon, or I am in trouble if I turn it in after that time!)

THE SAME/THE SAME AS

Students often forget to include ***the*** in the phrases ***the same*** and ***the same as***.

Similarly, errors are made when English students use the phrases ***the same with*** and ***the same to***. These two are not English terms.

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The same or ***the same as*** should always be used when talking about two things being very similar or identical.



Don't say: Mr. Chen and Miss Lee have ***same*** kind of car.
Do say: Mr. Chen and Miss Lee have ***the same*** kind of car.



Don't say: Bill's car is ***the same to*** Fred's car.
Do say: Bill's car is ***the same as*** Fred's car.

PREPARE/PREPARE(D) FOR

Prepare means to make ready for use.
We'd better ***prepare*** your parachute for your first jump.

Prepare(d) for means to get ready to do something.
I'm ***prepared for*** the first parachute jump. Everything is ready.

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Don't say: Alice ***prepared*** the English test all night.
This sentence means that Alice made or wrote the test for the other students to take.

Do say: Alice ***prepared for*** the English test all night.
This sentence means that Alice studied for the test.

EVEN IF and EVEN THOUGH

Students frequently have problems with the use of ***even if*** and ***even though***.

Even if should be used when the situation being talked about does not exist.

Even though should be used when the condition being referred to already exists.



Don't say: ***Even though*** it rains tomorrow I will travel to Toronto.

Do say: ***Even if*** it rains tomorrow I will travel to Toronto.

Don't say: ***Even if*** Taiwan is a small country, it has many beautiful sights.
Do say: ***Even though*** Taiwan is a small country, it has many beautiful sights.

ALMOST/MOST

Sometimes there is confusion between the words ***most*** and ***almost***. ***Most*** if you mean to say nearly all or a majority of a group. ***Almost*** means very nearly but not quite all.

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Don't say:
Almost Asians have black eyes and hair.

Do say:
Most Asians have black eyes and hair.

or

Do say:
Almost all Asians have black eyes and hair.

MAKE vs. DO

These two verbs create problems for most students as much of the usage is idiomatic and requires you to memorize it—rather than to understand and reason out the use.

Make functions as a main verb. ***Make*** in its more literal sense is generally used to refer to building, constructing, producing or creating something. That something can be abstract as well as concrete, for example: ***make a decision***, ***make an agreement***.

Do can function as a main verb or as an auxiliary verb. ***Do*** is used to describe an action without saying exactly what the action is, or to talk about work and jobs. Examples include: ***do something crazy***, ***do me a favor***.

Following is a list of some common (and idiomatic) uses:

MAKE	***Do***
make a decision	do a lesson
make dinner	do a math problem
make the bed	do one's best
make a mistake	do a favor
make a promise	do homework
make noise	do business
make fun of	do away with

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make progress
make an excuse
make a speech
make arrangements
make a profit
make a call
make enquiries
make a dress
make an effort
make something of myself
make a complaint
make a demand
make love
make money
make an offer
make an exception
make a suggestion
make an objection
make a phone call
make an agreement

do exercises
do the shopping
do it myself
do the accounts
do it in good time
do things around the house
do your job
do over 200 kilometers an hour
do it now
do well
do harm
do badly
do your part
do it in good time

Don't say: I'm going to ***make*** my homework tonight.

Do say: I'm going to ***do*** my homework tonight.

Don't say: I ***did*** a big mistake on the test yesterday.

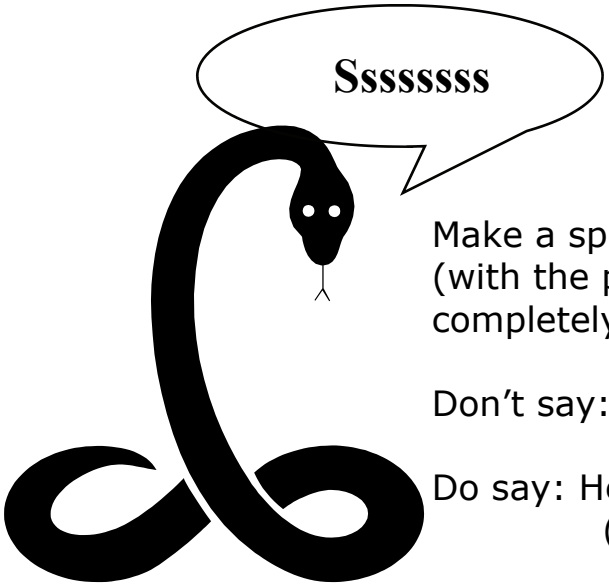
Do say: I ***made*** a big mistake on the test yesterday.



VERB ENDINGS

Many students of English speak using primarily simple present verbs or base-form verbs. They have particular problems with inflected verbs with the added ***–s*** and ***–ed*** endings. These endings are often either pronounced so softly as to be indistinguishable or dropped altogether.

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Make a special effort to use the proper verb (with the proper ending!) and pronounce it completely.

Don't say: He ***walk*** to school every day.

Do say: He ***walks*** to school every day.
(note the ***–s***)

Don't say: He ***want*** to buy a car yesterday.

Do say: He ***wanted*** to buy a car yesterday. (note the ***–ed***)



Yea! The grammar section is finished!

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Grammar Exercises

Try these exercises to see if you learned everything from Part Three!

(The answers are upside down on the bottom of the page)

_____1. You don't have a pen I can borrow, do you?
a. Yes, I don't. b. No, I don't.

_____2. I _____ last night.
a. studied very hard b. very studied

_____3. He's not _____ to buy that expensive Mercedes.
a. enough rich b. rich enough

_____4. I just got a new _____ watch. Seiko! Very nice.
a. Japanese b. Japan

_____5. Kwak and Kim got married two years _____.
a. ago b. before

_____6. _____ I was watching the movie, I got scared.
a. During b. While

_____7. He _____ English.
a. doesn't b. doesn't speak

_____8. His university grades are the _____ as his sister's.
a. the same as b. same as

_____9. _____ I was rich, I wouldn't buy a BMW.
a. Even though b. Even if

_____10. I need to go home now and _____ my homework.
a. do b. make

1. b, 2.a, 3.b, 4.a, 5.a, 6.b, 7.b, 8.a, 9.b, 10. a

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Part Four:

Misused and Abused Words



Students of English often learn to use certain words incorrectly. The words and terms that follow are specific to EFL students and are often used inappropriately or sometimes are attributable to a mixture of English and another language (and not really correct in either language!).

PHONE

When talking about receiving telephone messages, the word ***call*** in the phrase ***phone call*** is often left out, which completely changes the meaning of the sentence.

Don't say: I received a ***phone*** from my sister-in-law from America. This sentence means that you were given a telephone as a gift.

Do say: I received a ***phone call*** from my sister-in-law in America.

PROMISE

The use of the word ***promise*** is frequently used incorrectly as a noun, when it should be used as a verb, or vice versa.

The use of ***promise*** as a noun is an agreement to do something for someone, usually specifying what the agreement is.

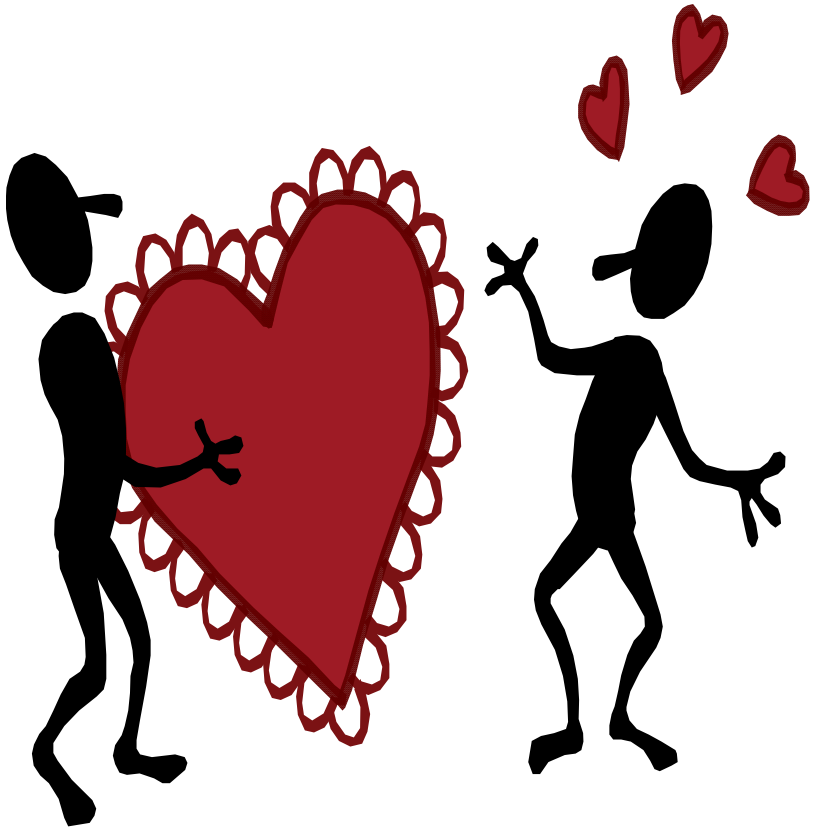
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The use of ***promise*** as a verb indicates that an agreement was made.

Don't say: I have a ***promise*** with my boyfriend tonight to have dinner.

Do say: I made a ***promise*** to my boyfriend to have dinner with him tonight. (used as a noun)

Do say: I ***promised*** my boyfriend that I would have dinner with him tonight. (used as a verb)



SAYING

The word ***saying*** is frequently misused by students of English to mean something that someone has said. English speakers use ***saying*** to refer to famous quote or a well-known statement.

Don't say: I respect my grandmother because she is wise, therefore I always listen to her ***saying***.

Do say: I respect my grandmother because she is wise, therefore I always listen to what she ***says***. (what she ***tells*** me, or what she has to ***say***)

Do say: There is an old ***saying***: "If you can't beat them, join them".

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DEAD

The word ***dead*** is used to describe the condition of an individual who is no longer alive. The word ***die*** is a verb meaning to stop living. These words are often confused by English students.

Don't say: He's ***dead*** about three years ago.
Do say: He ***died*** about three years ago.

Do say: He has been ***dead*** for three years.

HOLIDAY and VACATION

The words ***holiday*** and ***vacation*** are frequently used incorrectly.

Holiday refers to a day designated by the government to celebrate or commemorate a special event, such as Christmas or Chinese New Year.

Vacation refers to time off from work that employees earn and are usually from one week to one month in duration. ***Days off*** refer to the days that employees do not work during the week. ***Days off*** are usually on Saturday and Sunday.



Don't say: My ***holiday*** is next month.

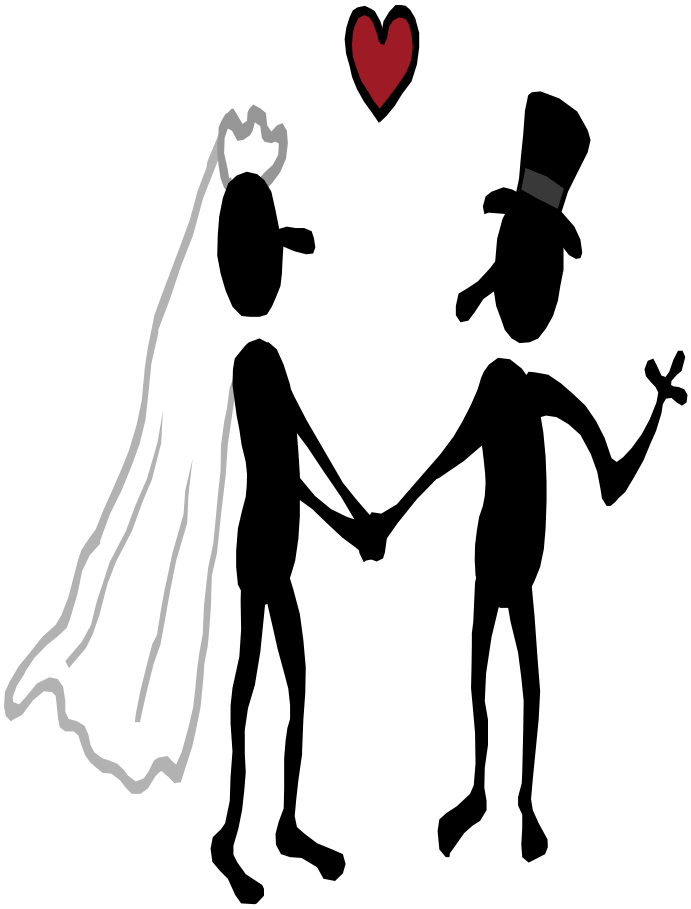
Do say: My ***vacation*** is next month.

Don't say: My ***holiday*** is Saturday and Sunday.

Do say: My ***days off*** are Saturday and Sunday.

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BOYFRIEND and GIRLFRIEND



In English, the terms ***boyfriend*** and ***girlfriend*** usually means or implies lover. If a man says that he is going to the movies with his boy friend, a native speaker may think that the person is gay or homosexual. You may not want to give the listener the wrong impression. You can simply say ***friend***. The same is true when a woman uses the term ***girlfriend*** when speaking of a ***friend***.

Don't say (female): I'm going out to dinner with my ***girlfriend***.

Do say: I'm going out to dinner with a friend.

COME and GO

Use ***come*** if you are at a place and are talking about that place as your destination.



A student at school might say the following:

Don't say: I ***go*** here by bus everyday.

Do say: I ***come*** here by bus everyday.

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Use ***go*** if you are at one place and are talking about another place as your destination.

A person in the classroom might say:

Don't say: I will ***come*** home right after class.
Do say: I will ***go*** home right after class.



PLAY

The word ***play*** is used when talking about games or sports that require at least two people (or a team) to participate in. It is not used when talking about a game or sport if only one individual can participate (or where a person is competing against themselves). Other examples of such sports are swimming, running, camping, etc.

Don't say: I will ***play*** bowling tomorrow.
Do say: I will ***go*** bowling tomorrow.

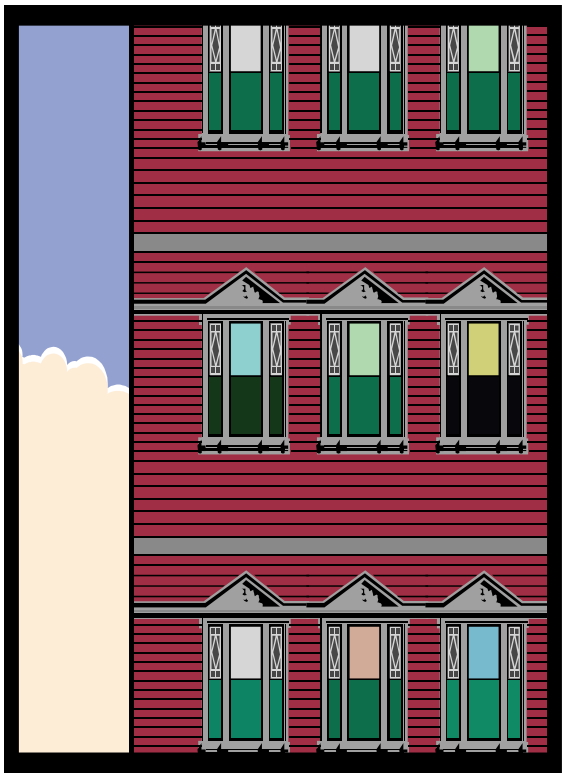
Another problem with ***play*** is that it is often used by students to describe activities in which they engage with friends. For most English speakers ***play*** is what young children do with their friends when they ***play*** with dolls or cars and trucks, or go riding their bicycles, etc.

Adults should name the activities in which they will engage.

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Don't say: Tonight I am going to ***play*** with my friends.
Do say: Tonight I am going to ***go drinking and singing*** with my friends.

APART



In some countries the word ***apart*** when used to describe ***apartment*** housing is incorrect. The correct English word is ***apartment(s)***.

Don't say: I live at Hyundae ***Apart***, number 309.

Do say: I live at Hyundae ***Apartments***, number 309.

Do say: My ***apartment*** is on the other side of town.



REMEMBRANCE/MEMORY

The word ***remembrance*** is often used incorrectly. Usually the correct word should be ***memory***.

The word ***remembrance*** is used to refer to an object that reminds us about ***memories*** from the past.

In this context, the word ***memory*** is used when referring to recalling times and situations, or things from the past.

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Don’t say: I have many fond ***remembrances*** from my childhood.

Do say: I have many fond ***memories*** of my childhood.

Do say: I keep a doll on my bed that my grandmother gave me as a ***remembrance*** of my childhood.

OF COURSE

Of course should be used when referring to something that could be considered obvious to almost every one. It is often used inappropriately to mean an affirmation of something, even when that something may not be obvious.

Don’t say:
Paul: Do you live in Berlin?
Marcus: Of course, I'm German.
Do say:
Paul: Do all Germans living in Berlin speak the German language?
Marcus: Of course! What else would they speak?

HOUR/O’CLOCK



The word ***hour*** is frequently used incorrectly, when the speaker actually means ***o'clock***.

Hour is used to indicate the duration of something.

O'clock is used to indicate a specific time of day.

Don’t say: I have to meet my professor at three ***hour***.
Do say: I have to meet my professor at three ***o'clock***.

Do say: I have to meet my professor for an ***hour*** at three ***o'clock***.

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VOCABULARY

Vocabulary is often used incorrectly when the speaker should say ***words***. A word is a member (or part) of a larger ***vocabulary***. A ***vocabulary*** is the total words known by a speaker or total words in a language.



Don't say: I learn 20 new ***vocabularies*** a day.

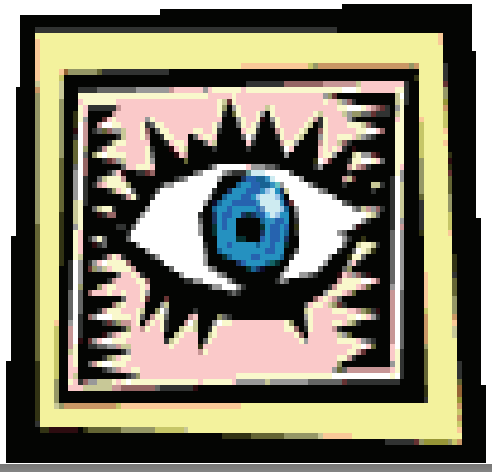
Do say: I learn 20 new ***words*** a day.

EYE SHOPPING

While a wonderful term in itself, English speakers have no idea what ***eye shopping*** means. Window shopping is the term that native speakers would use.

Don't say: My girlfriend and I often go ***eye shopping*** on the weekend.

Do say: My girlfriend and I often go ***window shopping*** on the weekend.



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SALARYMAN

The use of the term salaryman or its equivalent by many Asians to describe an occupation is very vague and means nothing to a native speaker. There are countless jobs that receive salaries: doctors, lawyers, accountants, directors, janitors, school teachers, etc.

One should specifically state the job or field if one is employed by a large company. For instance: accountant, salesman, marketing director, computer specialist, etc.

Don't say: My brother is a ***salaryman***.

Do say: My brother is a ***lawyer***.

WEAR/CLOTHING/CLOTHES



The word ***wear*** is often incorrectly used to mean ***clothing*** or ***clothes***.

Don't say: The ***wear*** she has on is very beautiful.

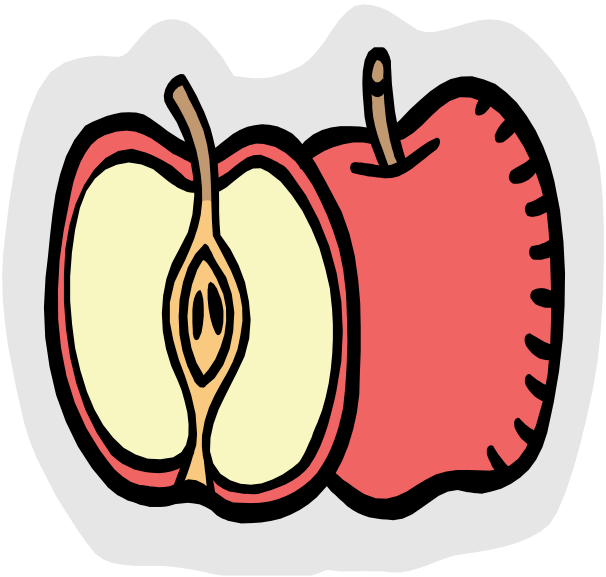
Do say: The ***clothes*** she has on are very beautiful.

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FAMOUS/WELL-KNOWN

Many students use ***famous*** when they should use the term ***well-known***.

While these two terms can be usually be considered synonyms, ***famous*** has in its definition that something is ***famous*** because of an achievement of some sort.



Something that is ***famous*** could also be said to be better-known and more widely-known than something that is just ***well-known***.

Don't say: Washington state is ***famous*** for its delicious apples.

Do say: Washington state is ***well-known*** for its delicious apples.

Don't say: Mexico is ***famous*** for its spicy foods.

Do say: Mexico is ***well-known*** for its spicy foods.

TRIP/TRAVEL

Trip and ***travel*** are frequently used interchangeably and they should not be. ***Trip*** is usually used as a noun and ***travel*** is usually used as a verb.

Don't say: I took a ***travel*** to Africa last summer.
Do say: I took a ***trip*** to Africa last year.

Don't say: I want to ***trip*** to Europe after I graduate.
Do say: I want to ***travel*** to Europe after I graduate.

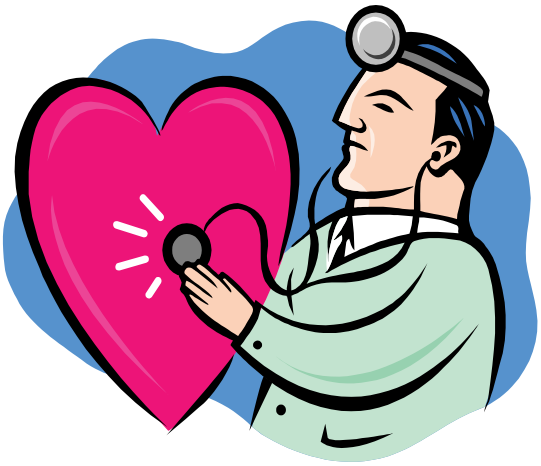
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COMMON/POPULAR

The words ***common*** and ***popular*** are often incorrectly interchanged by English students.

Popular means to be liked, appreciated, and accepted by many people.

Common means to be prevalent and occurring often. Many ***common*** things are not well liked and occur often, but this does not make it ***popular***.



Heart disease is ***common*** among older people, but it is not very ***popular***!

Don't say: Traffic accidents are very ***popular*** in Kenya.

Do say: Traffic accidents are very ***common*** in Kenya.

MR./MRS./MS./MISS

When using the titles of Mr., Mrs., and Miss when addressing people, English speakers use the person's last name (family name). Asians frequently use a persons first name (given name) and not the family name.

Don't say: I would like to introduce my English professor, Mr. Jim.

Do say: I would like to introduce my English professor, Mr. Heard.



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DENY/REFUSE



Students often confuse the meaning of these two words and use them interchangeably.

Refuse is a verb that typically means someone is unwilling to allow, accept, consider, or receive someone or something.

Refuse may imply that someone is determined and may even be mildly rude in their refusal.

Example: When he came to her office, she ***refused*** to see him.

Deny is also a verb and usually has the meaning to refuse to admit the existence, truth, or value of something. She ***denied*** that her car was worth only £500.

Don't say: She was offered an opportunity to take a great job in China, but she ***denied*** to take it.

Do say: She was offered an opportunity to take a great job in China, but she ***refused*** to take it.

Don't say: Some people say he gambles away all of his earnings. But he ***refuses*** it.

Do say: Some people say he gambles away all of his earnings. But he ***denies*** it.

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MAYBE I THINK

A common expression used by many students is ***maybe I think*** when they are expressing their thoughts about something.

The problem is that ***maybe*** expresses uncertainty, so using it with ***I think*** suggests that the speaker is not sure whether he thinks (or believes) what he is saying.

Don't say: ***Maybe I think*** I will become a reporter after I graduate from university.

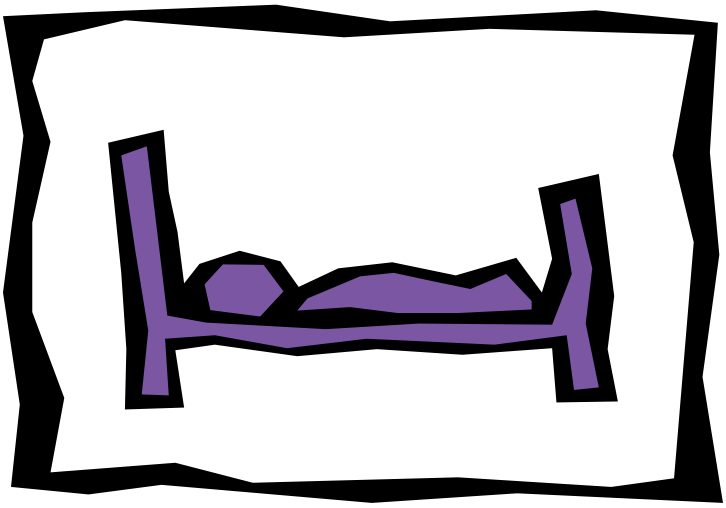
Do say: I ***think*** I will become a reporter after I graduate from university.

or,

Do say: ***Maybe*** I will become a reporter after I graduate from university.

SLEEPING WITH

For English speakers the expression ***sleeping with*** usually means two people are having sex together. Using this expression incorrectly could give the listener the wrong impression and embarrass the speaker.



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Don't say: I stopped ***sleeping with*** my male room mate because he snores too loudly. This sentence implies that the two people were in a sexual relationship, which may not be the intent of the speaker.

Do say: I no longer ***sleep in*** the same room as my male room mate because he snores too loudly.

MAJOR/MAJOR IN



The word ***major***, when used to mean the subject that one studies in college, is frequently used incorrectly.

When used as a verb, the word ***major*** requires the preposition ***in***.

When used as a noun, the word ***major*** often requires a possessive noun or pronoun. Also ***major*** is only used in referring to students, not graduates.

If referring to graduates the past tense must be used.

Don't say: Miss Suda ***majored*** political science.

Do say: Miss Suda ***majored in*** political science.

Do say: Mr. Grey's ***major*** is chemistry.

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TODAY with MORNING, AFTERNOON, or NIGHT

A common error is to use the word ***today*** with ***morning***, ***afternoon***, or ***night*** when talking about things that happen on the same day that the speaker is speaking.

When using ***morning***, ***afternoon***, and ***night*** it is implied that the speaker is talking about the same day. Using the word ***today*** in this situation is redundant. Instead, use ***this*** (***this*** morning, ***this*** afternoon, ***this*** evening).

If you are referring to other days, use ***yesterday***, ***tomorrow***, ***the day after tomorrow***, etc.



Don't say: ***Today morning*** I started making tamales at 6:30.

Do say: ***This morning*** I started making tamales at 6:30.

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Misused and Abused Words Exercises

Try these exercises to see if you learned everything in this section!
(The answers are upside down on the bottom of the page)

_____1. My regular _____ are Saturday and Sunday.
a. holiday b. days off

_____2. Last night I _____ with my friends.
a. played b. went singing

_____3. My class starts at nine _____.
a. o'clock b. hour

_____4. Mr. Jang is a _____.
a. salaryman b. businessman

_____5. I _____ English Literature at university.
a. majored b. majored in

_____6. _____ afternoon I'm going to go to the cinema.
a. Today b. This

_____7. Dr. Em is a wise man, I always listen to _____.
a. his saying b. what he says

_____8. I _____ my mother that I would get an A in English.
a. have a promise to b. promised

_____9. I have many great _____ of my grandmother.
a. remembrances b. memories

_____10. Let's go downtown and go _____.
a. eye shopping b. window shopping

1. b, 2.b, 3.a, 4.b, 5.b, 6.b, 7.b, 8.b, 9.b, 10.b

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Part Five: Preposition Power

Most students of English understand the basics of prepositions but have difficulty with the broader range of prepositions once their vocabulary grows. Sharpen your use of prepositions in this section and your skill level will move up a couple notches.

Try this basic set of questions then look at the review on the following pages. Put a preposition in each blank or an "X" if the blank doesn't need a preposition! The answers are at the end of the exercise.

1. I go shopping _____ the weekends.

2. My Business Law class is _____ 8 pm every Monday.

3. My company moved _____ Seoul _____ Pusan _____ 2001.

4. Skiing is my favorite activity _____ every winter.

5. Mr. Lee's dog ran away _____ last night.

6. He likes to get up early _____ the morning.

7. _____ June 3rd we will all take a day off.

8. We all sleep late _____ a holiday.

9. _____ the weekends I like to take a nap _____ midday.

10. Mr. Savalas got married _____ a week ago.

11. Let's meet _____ Wednesday evening and have dinner together.

12. Most of us don't like to go outside _____ the summer.

13. Ms. Bila's car broke down and she had to walk home _____ last night.

14. She is usually home and sleeping _____ midnight.

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15. None of the students study _____ Saturday evenings.

16. I never go to work _____ Christmas Day.

17. I didn't do anything _____ last weekend.

18. My family lives _____ the Samsung Apartments _____ Youngsan Dong _____ Seoul.

19. We used to live _____ Chungcheonbuk-do province, but now we live _____ Cheju Island.

20. I live _____ 2233 East 23rd Street.

21. Please get _____ the car so we can go!

22. Did he get _____ the bus yet?

23. Let's finish this work _____ noon so we can go to lunch.

24. I used to live _____ the ground floor of my building but I moved up to the fifth floor.

25. I hate standing _____ line _____ a supermarket.

26. _____ vacation I like to lie _____ the beach and swim _____ the sea.

27. I want to take my next vacation _____ China.

28. Let's go _____ the hospital _____ next week to visit Mr. Park.

29. I was born _____ 8 pm _____ November 9th _____ 1976.

30. You can find the answers to this quiz _____ the bottom of this page.

Answers to the Exercise

1. on 2. at 3. to/from, from/to, in 4. X 5. X 6. in 7. on 8. on 9. on,at 10. X 11. on 12. in 13. X 14. by/at 15. on 16. on 17. X 18. in, in, in 19. in, on 20. at 21. in 22. on 23. at/by 24. on 25. in, at 26. on, on, in 27. in 28. to, X 29. at, on, in 30 at/on

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Prepositions of Time

At **used with exact time**	**a specific time (at midnight)** **a time (at lunch time, at noon)** **night** **sunrise, sunset, dawn, dusk**
In **used with a period of time**	**the morning** **the evening** **the afternoon** **a month (in February)** **a season (in the winter)** **a year (in 2005)** **an amount of time (in two weeks, in two years, in two minutes)**
On **used with day and dates**	**a day (on Monday)** **a specific day (on Christmas Day)** **a date (June 3rd, 2004)**
No Preposition	**every day, week, year (every Wednesday)** **every *time* (every ten minutes)** **last year** **a week, a year *ago*** **ten minutes *ago***
For	**an amount of time (for ten minutes, for ten years)**
Since	**a specific time (since November, since noon)**

Prepositions of Place

To/From **used to movement from one place to another (or direction)**	**I drive to the gym every day.** **I walk to class in the morning.** **Dr. Lee moved from Seoul to Mokpo.**
At **used to denote position or rest (at a specific place)**	**He is waiting at the door.** **He lives at home.** **We'll meet at the restaurant.**
In **used to denote position or rest inside something**	**The book is in my desk.** **We took walk in the countryside.**
Into **denotes movement towards the inside of something**	**Let's go into the library and study.** **He drove his car into the garage.**

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More Prepositions of Place

BETWEEN vs. AMONG

Between means something is placed in a position that is mid-point, or inline of two other objects. ***Among*** means that something placed within a group of more than two other objects.

Between



Among



The heart is ***between*** the stars.

The heart is ***among*** the stars.

Between can be used in a more abstract sense:

Let's keep this secret ***between*** us. The secret is the heart, we are the stars in the example above left.

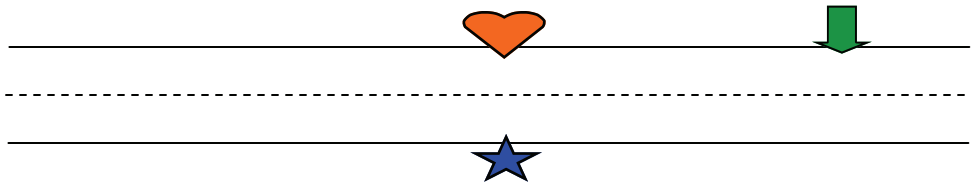
Only the two of us will know the secret. We won't tell anyone else.

Among can also be used in an abstract sense:

Let's keep this secret ***among*** us.
More than two of us know the secret. We won't tell anyone else.

OPPOSITE and ACROSS FROM

Students of English often confuse native speakers of English by using ***opposite*** and ***across from*** to mean that something is ***across*** the street ***from***, but not necessarily exactly ***opposite*** the reference point. English speakers will expect that something that is ***opposite*** or ***across from*** something else will be exactly ***across the street***.



Don't say: The star is ***across from*** (or ***opposite***) the arrow.
Do say: The star is ***across from*** (or ***opposite***) the heart.
Do say: The star is ***across from***, ***but down the street from*** the arrow.

Preposition Exercises

Try these exercises to see if you learned everything from Part Five! Put the letter of the correct answer in the blank in front of the question number.
The answers are upside down on the bottom of the page.

_____1. Let's meet _____ the afternoon.
a. on b. in c. at

_____2. Dr. Kwang studied English _____ twenty years.
a. since b. for c. at

_____3. He wants to meet _____ the library at noon.
a. on b. at c. into

_____4. Hyesuk has been studying _____ 3 a.m.
a. for b. since c. at

_____5. We meet _____ every Monday.
a. at b. no preposition c. on

_____6. On Sundays they take a walk _____ the countryside.
a. in b. at c. on

_____7. Ramona usually sleeps _____ noon.
a. until b. by c. since

_____8. It is too cold _____ the winter.
a. in b. no preposition c. since

_____9. Let's take an airplane trip _____ Hong Kong.
a. to b. into c. over

_____10. Our apartment is _____ the fifth floor.
a. on b. in c. into

1. b, 2.b, 3.b, 4.b, 5.b, 6.a, 7.a, 8.a, 9.a, 10.a

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Part Six: Articles Made Easy

One of the fastest ways to make your English speech sound more normal is to use articles consistently and correctly. The absence of articles in a student's speech is a definite sign of the beginner.

Grammar authority Michael Swan, in his book ***Practical English Usage*** (Second Edition, Oxford University Press, 1995) tells us that: *"The correct use of the **articles** (a/an and the) is one of the most difficult points in English grammar."* So, in this section we will try to make it as simple and as clear as possible.

Collins Cobuild Publishers report that 8.5% of all English communication is ***the***, ***a***, or ***an***. So, if you can improve in this area—a big plus for you!

SECTION ONE: ARTICLE USAGE

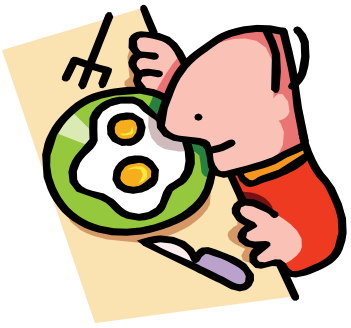
1. *WHEN* ARTICLES ARE NOT USED:

Before a common noun in the singular if it is preceded by:
- demonstrative terms such as ***this***, ***that***, ***these*** or ***those***;
- possessive adjectives such as ***his***, ***her***, ***my***, ***their***, ***our*** or ***your***; or

When referring to:
- the name of a specific mountain or island;
- the name of a city, country, continent, or season; and
- one's own parents (father or mother);
- meals (breakfast, lunch, supper, dinner) and sports;
- the names of diseases, and

after phrases such as ***kind of*** or ***sort of***, or after ***whose***.

Don't say: I had ***a breakfast*** this morning.
Do say: I had ***breakfast*** this morning.



Don't say: I am from ***the Taipei***.
Do say: I am from ***Taipei***.

Don't say: That is ***a my*** car.
Do say: That is ***my*** car.

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Don't say: I want ***the that*** pencil.
Do say: I want ***that*** pencil.

Don't say: ***The basketball*** is my favorite sport.
Do say: ***Basketball*** is my favorite sport.

Don't say: I love ***the Phuket Island***.
Do say: I love ***Phuket Island***.

2. A/AN - THE *INDEFINITE* ARTICLE

Note that when ***a*** is used, it is used before nouns that begin with a ***consonant sound***. ***An*** is used before nouns that begin with a ***vowel sound***. Many students incorrectly say ***an university*** or ***a hour***.

Don't say: They had to take ***a x-ray*** of his broken arm.
Do say: They had to take ***an x-ray*** of his broken arm.

X-ray begins with a vowel sound and should take the article ***an.***

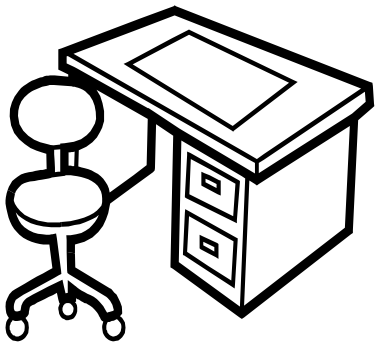


2.1 The *indefinite* article (*a/an*) *is not used* before:

uncountable nouns such as advice, furniture, machinery, money and work; nouns such as work, health and permission; plural countable nouns such as dogs and cats; and cardinal numbers (one, two, etc.) that precede nouns.

Don't say: The professor gave her ***a permission*** to miss class.
Do say: The professor gave her ***permission*** to miss class.

Don't say: I bought ***a furniture*** for the office today.
Do say: I bought ***furniture*** for the office today.



Don't say: I bought ***a one desk*** today.
Do say: I bought ***one desk*** today.

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2.2. The *indefinite* article (*a/an*) *must be used*:

2.2.1. When referring to one specific type of person, place or thing



Don't say: I saw ***policeman*** at your house yesterday.
Do say: I saw ***a policeman*** at your house yesterday.

Don't say: I saw ***strange*** car in front of your house late last night.
Do say: I saw ***a strange*** car in front of your house late last night.



2.2.1. Before the words trillion, billion, million, thousand, hundred and dozen—if no cardinal number precedes them

Don't say: I'd like ***dozen*** pencils please.
Do say: I'd like ***a dozen*** pencils please.

2.2.2. Before professional titles - if not preceded by a cardinal number.

Don't say: I'm really sick. I need ***doctor*** fast!
Do say: I'm really sick. I need ***a doctor*** fast!

Don't say: I'm in big trouble. I need ***a ten lawyers*** fast!
Do say: I'm in big trouble. I need ***ten lawyers*** fast!

2.2.3. When referring to a member of a class

Don't say: ***Man*** should serve his country in the army.
Do say: ***A man*** should serve his country in the army.

2.2.4. Before exclamations beginning with what



Don't say: What ***exciting*** horse race!
Do say: What ***an exciting*** horse race!

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2.2.5. Before certain clauses and phrases such as:
It's a big problem.
It's a pity.
to keep a secret
to have an opportunity
to have a plan
to make an effort
to have an illness (common illnesses, not diseases)

Don't say: I have ***cold***.
Do say: I have ***a cold.***

Don't say: He made ***effort*** to pass the class.
Do say: He made ***an effort*** to pass the class.

3. *THE* - THE *DEFINITE* ARTICLE

3.1 The *definite* article (the) in a general and specific sense:

In general, nouns do not need an article when they are used in a general sense, but if they are used in a specific sense the definite article is needed. Note the inclusion or omission in the following examples:

3.1.1. Plural Nouns



Life is too short to spend worrying about things.
A life not lived to the fullest, is not worth living

Cats are smarter than dogs.
A dog can be a man's best friend.

3.1.2. Abstract Nouns

Love is the essence of life.
A love such as ours, makes life worth living.

3.1.3. Material Nouns

We can't live without air to breathe.
The air in Mexico City is really polluted.

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3.1.4. Days, Months, Seasons

Mondays are always a bad day at work.
The Monday I was hired was a great day!

3.1.5. Names of Languages

Chinese is really difficult to learn.
The Chinese language is tonal.

3.1.6. Meals

Breakfast is my biggest meal of the day.
The breakfast I had yesterday gave me an upset stomach.

3.1.7. Colors

Green is the color that symbolizes jealousy.
The blue in the sea today is beautiful!

3.2. The *definite* article (*the*) *must always be used* before:

3.2.1. Singular countable nouns when there is only one
the house next to mine
the sun
the Earth

Don't say: ***House*** I live in is very small.
Do say: ***The house*** I live in is very small.

3.2.2. Occupational titles, positions, or family names
the prime minister
the Smiths
the accountant

Don't say: ***Lawyer*** said that I should plead, "Not Guilty".
Do say: ***The lawyer*** said that I should plead, "Not Guilty".

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3.2.3. The names of canals, rivers, seas, oceans, deserts, mountain ranges, groups of islands, gulfs, hotels, theaters, and ships



Don't say: I took a vacation in ***Rocky Mountains***.
Do say: I took a vacation in ***the Rocky Mountains***.

3.2.4. Names of countries formed as a union of states, tribe or provinces. Examples include The United Arab Emirates, The United States, The European Union, The Philippines

3.2.5. Names of Newspapers, certain books, and instruments

Don't say: I read ***China Post*** every day.
Do say: I read ***the China Post*** every day.

Do say: My mother reads ***the Bible*** everyday.

Do say: Jenny played ***the trumpet*** while she was in high school.

3.2.6. Nouns that are made specific by some modifying phrase or clause

Don't say: ***Ring*** that Mary lost.
Do say: ***The ring*** that Mary lost.

Do say: ***The CD*** that I decided to buy.

3.2.7. Nouns which represent people, places or things that we meet, employ, or use regularly - even if the specific persons, places or things are unknown to our listener or reader

Don't say: My husband went to ***bank*** this morning.
Do say: My husband went to ***the bank*** this morning.

Do say: I had to put my dog in ***the pet hospital***. He is really sick.

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Do say: My sister is at ***the market*** right now.

3.2.8. Singular nouns that represent a whole class (see 3.1.)

Don't say: ***Cat*** is a beautiful animal.
Do say: ***The cat*** is a beautiful animal.

3.2.9. Adjectives being used as a noun to form a class

Don't say: ***Poor*** need our help.
Do say: ***The poor*** need our help.

Do say: ***The rich*** pay a lot of money in taxes.

Do say: ***The homeless*** are the responsibility of the government.

3.1.10. Common nouns to convert them into abstract nouns

Don't say: Sports bring out ***animal*** in me!
Do say: Sports bring out ***the animal*** in me!

3.1.11. Proper nouns only when they are qualified by an adjective, or defined by an adjective clause

Do say: ***The incomparable*** William Shakespeare wrote over a thousand works.



SECTION TWO: QUANTIFIERS

Students of English usually have as much trouble with quantifiers as they do with articles. Therefore, quantifiers are introduced here as they often act as article-equivalents when plural countable nouns or uncountable nouns are referred to in a way that doesn't specify exactly how many or how much, but still implies a specific group or quantity.

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4. SOME and ANY

Some and ***any*** are the most common quantifiers. ***Some*** is used with affirmative statements and ***any*** is used with questions and negative statements.

English speakers do not normally say:

I bought apples.
Do you have bananas?
The baby needs milk.
Are there people waiting?

Instead, they generally say:

I bought ***some*** apples.
Do you have ***any*** bananas?
The baby needs ***some*** milk.
Are there ***any*** people waiting?

5. MUCH and MANY, (A) LITTLE, (A) FEW, A LOT OF

A few, few, many are used with countable nouns.
A little, little, much are used with uncountable nouns.
A lot of is used with both countable and uncountable nouns.

Much and ***many*** are used with the negative and interrogative forms.



Don't say: I have ***few*** money.
Do say: I have a ***little*** money.
Do say: I have ***some*** money.

Don't say: Do you have ***few*** money?
Do say: Do you have ***much*** money?

Don't say: I have ***much*** friends.
Do say: I have ***many*** friends.

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Articles Exercises

Try these exercises to see if you learned everything
from Part Six!
The answers are upside down on the bottom of the page.

_____1. We ate _____ lunch at noon.
a. the b. a c. no article

_____2. The big BMW is his _____ car.
a. the b. a c. no article

_____3. My favorite magazine is _____ *Economist*.
a. the b. a c. no article

_____4. Youngpil used to play _____ saxophone.
a. the b. a c. no article

_____5. My mom is really sick. She's in _____ hospital.
a. the b. a c. no article

_____6. _____ car I drive is really old and beat up.
a. the b. a c. no article

_____7. They took _____ x-ray of her broken finger.
a. a b. an c. no article

_____8. This is _____ big opportunity for you.
a. an b. a c. no article

_____9. To pass this class, you'll have to make _____ effort.
a. an b. a c. no article

_____10. I need to buy _____ ten pencils for school.
a. an b. a c. no article

1. c, 2. c, 3. a, 4. a, 5. a, 6. a, 7. b, 8. b, 9. a, 10. c

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Finished !

By now you should have a much better grasp of English and know a LOT more about the little details that really make a difference.

Don’t just set this book aside - be sure to review it from time to time and keep a few notes on this and the next page.

Good luck with your studies, if you got this far you are doing SUPER well! Good for you!

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Notes

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